**NBDC Regional Stakeholder Dialogue, 23-24 July, Bahir Dar**

Dear workshop participants, invited guests, ladies and gentlemen!!

On behalf of the Amhara Bureau of Agriculture, I would like to welcome you to Bahir Dar and the **NBDC** **Regional Stakeholder Dialogue on rain water management in the Blue Nile river basin**, organized by ILRI, IWMI, ARARI, BOA and Abay Basin Authority.

The government of Ethiopia and its partners has developed considerable experience in planning and implementing soil and water conservation and land management interventions, with an aim to conserve natural resources, to improve food security and rural livelihoods. This knowledge and experience has been amplified in the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) of the government and is consolidated further into the Government’s flagship program, the Sustainable Land Management (SLM) program under the framework of the Ethiopian Strategic Investment Framework (ESIF) for SLM. The strong commitment made by the government to this program has drawn widespread acknowledgement of its efforts and has attracted substantial funds from international donor community and implementing partners. This investment is to be spent over the coming 10 years implementing this work.

Dear workshop participants

As I have been informed, representatives from the three regional government states Amhara, Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz, and representatives from federal institutions, including government, donors, and NGOs have been invited to reflect on the experiences so far and to develop some ideas for future interventions.

As part of this stakeholder dialogue we will reflect on the experiences of the Nile Basin Development Challenge (NBDC) program over the last 3-4 years and how it may assist in further strengthening the implementation of the SLM program. The NBDC is sponsored through the Challenge Program on Water and Food. In the case of the Nile, the Challenge has been how to support and develop rainwater management strategies. The NBDC program is led through a consortium of research and development organizations drawn from both national and international organizations, led by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI). However, we will not only reflect on the experiences of the NBDC, but also on experiences of other programs, projects and organizations.

Over the past few decades, reinforced by the recent work of the NBDC, there have been some significant achievements made in soil and water management. There has been considerable effort from regional government and supporting projects to take the soil and water conservation agenda forward using the community based integrated watershed management approach. I know through my discussions with Dr. Simon from the NBDC and others that many of these achievements take the form of building trust and engagement with different stakeholders.

Just to highlight a few lessons from the NBDC, that I am sure are shared by other projects and programs and will be further developed and talked about in this meeting:

1. **Development of partnerships**. The NBDC has worked hard to establish long term, meaningful partnerships with a number of agencies and communities. For example, in setting up the work the NBDC consulted heavily with these organizations to try and ensure the work would be usefully targeted and institutionally sustainable.
2. **Capacity building.** Over the past years the NBDC has undertaken both formal training of advanced study, MSc and PhD students as well as less formal training with communities.
3. **Establishment of platforms for dialogue, information exchange and action.** In three communities at Fogera, Jeldu and Diga the NBDC has worked with DA’s, extension agents and community leaders in platforms to manage natural resources in a sustainable manner.
4. **Characterization and collection of primary data**. To help support policy development and implementation, there has been an evidence based fact finding to demonstrate and show where changes might lead to benefits to communities.
5. **Anticipating future developments**. As we look to the future, the NBDC is considering potential developments through the use of scenarios and modeling. Results will assist decision makers to take informed decisions based on potential consequences of different actions at a landscape level.

Dear workshop participants

Finally, I would like to thank the organizers for bringing us together in this Stakeholder Dialogue, and wishing you all the success in your deliberations. I look forward to hear about the outcome.

Thank You